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Ravalli County Commissioners

Sirs,

I am ~~writing to comment on the Bitterroot NF travel plan.~~ I am 61 years old, born in Missoula and have used the Bitterroot NF many, many times during my life.

I am totally in favor of logging if done on a sustainable basis, managed with wildlife needs a high priority in the process and corporate profits farther down the list. All new roads and many old roads must be obliterated. If an area is logged and roads are left, open or closed, the area is changed permanently. With road obliteration logging is a temporary change, habitat will soon grow back. Almost all controversy would be eliminated. No roads, no argument. It is cheaper for the FS to obliterate roads than to maintain roads over a not so long of a period. This is a positive program now being done in the Clearwater NF. Creating needed jobs in the process.

Roads increase poaching, littering, the spread of noxious weeds, take approximately 3 acres out of production and habitat elimination for every mile of road, erosion problems, culverts eliminate fish migration, elimination of security habitat, encourage unethical hunting. Put increased pressure on endangered species, disrupts migration routes and travel corridors and totally eliminates the outdoor experience. Over the years our public lands have changed from a forest to a tree farm and mechanical playground.

With most ATV and snowmobile users feeling all public land is at their disposal, the only way to counter this is they must be limited to travel where all vehicles are allowed. Especially during ALL hunting seasons. This is a extremely positive and popular program in southern Idaho. The FS has publicly stated it does not have the money or resources to monitor or police illegal usage. Numerous studies have proven this illegal use pertains to the majority of drivers. I would like the FS to work with the Montana FWP in making mandatory large identity numbers and a large increase in fines, plus a loss of hunting and fishing privileges.

ATV usage on trails is a definite disaster. It's a contest to go where no other ATV has gone. It starts with one set of tires in the trail and the other set creating a second parallel trail, also known as a rut. When 2 ruts become wet, rocks and roots become more and more exposed. It becomes too rough so the trail is moved over and widened. If a tree falls in the trail, make a new trail around it. If a large rock or large root becomes too exposed, even more widening or another trail. Swampy areas are turned into mud puddles. This habitat is destroyed. Creek crossings are flattened out and widened, warming the water. With ever widening and more numerous trails it becomes more than a problem, it becomes a disaster. These disasters I have witnessed on public lands where there are little or no restrictions and I have no plans of ever visiting them again. I ask "Why does the FS continue to cave into their demands?"

The ATV and snowmobile clubs scream about their rights being infringed upon. What about my rights? I have the right to demand my public lands be treated with care and respect. So that future generations will be able to enjoy the same things I saw, experienced and enjoyed. We are just temporary caretakers, not the final generation.

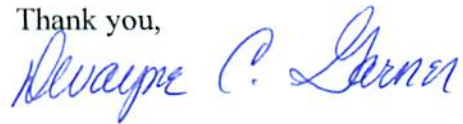
For these reasons I would like the Sapphire Wilderness Study area to be totally protected against motorized intrusion. Especially trails #313, #39, #44 and #86 as a travel corridor, regain hiking opportunities, packing access and enhance wildlife habitat.

The Alan Mountain Roadless Area, Sleeping Child Roadless Area and Stony Mountain Roadless Area all need to be closed to motorized use.

All trails going to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness need to be closed to motorized use. I pack with llamas and fighting with these people needs to be eliminated. The people I'm talking about are the same ones who totally ruined one of your meetings down the Bitterroot.

I have hiked the Blue Joint Wilderness Study Area many times; this area must be declared non motorized. It is much too precious to be ruined under rubber tires and tracks. A person shouldn't have to only go to wilderness areas to have peace of mind that your hard work will not be destroyed by someone pushing a throttle.

Thank you,



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